In the Claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of leader election in a multi-node storage area network, comprising:

each of the nodes communicating to all of the nodes within a cluster of storage area network nodes of loss of connectivity between a node in said cluster and a cluster leader;

pruning a quantity of cluster leader candidates in response to said loss of connectivity;

employing a two pass protocol to elect a new cluster leader responsive to pruning a quantity of cluster leader candidates, including election from a majority group of said nodes and election from a minority group of said nodes;

selecting a single new cluster leader from one of said majority and minority groups of nodes; and

validating approval of node leadership election within said cluster of nodes to function as said new cluster leader, including determining said selected cluster leader has connectivity with a select group of clients in communication with said cluster following selection of said new cluster leader.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of pruning cluster leader candidates includes one of the nodes with a higher identifier node value refraining from requesting a position of new cluster leader candidate.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising said first pass of said two pass protocol determining if said selected cluster leader candidate is from said ~~a~~ majority grouping of said nodes within said cluster of nodes.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of pruning cluster leader candidates includes mitigating time to convergence of election of said new cluster leader.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of validating approval of node leadership election within said cluster of nodes to function as a new cluster leader includes biasing cluster reformation selected from the group consisting of: a majority grouping of nodes within said cluster of nodes, and connectivity with a select group of clients in communication with said cluster, and combinations thereof.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 5, further comprising requiring additional time for the election of said node leader candidate from a minority grouping of nodes within said cluster of nodes.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of electing said new cluster leader candidate from a minority grouping of nodes within said cluster of nodes upon failure of a cluster leader candidate from a majority grouping of nodes, wherein said failure is selected from a group consisting of: lock of a quorum disk, and said cluster leader candidate, and combinations thereof.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising election of one of the nodes within a grouping of connected nodes to function as a new leader candidate, wherein said node is selected from a group consisting of: a majority grouping of connected nodes and a minority grouping of connected nodes.

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21. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of selecting a single new cluster leader including employing a quorum disk lock with a protocol to provide arbitration of ownership of a quorum resource for an evenly split cluster.

22. (New) A method of leader election in a multi-node storage area network, comprising:

each of the nodes communicating to all of the nodes within a cluster of storage area network nodes of loss of connectivity between a node in said cluster and a cluster leader;

pruning a quantity of cluster leader candidates in response to said loss of connectivity;

employing a two pass protocol having two up to two elections for a same leader candidate to elect a new cluster leader responsive to pruning a quantity of cluster leader candidates, including election of a first cluster leader from a majority group of said nodes and election of a second cluster leader from a minority group of said nodes;

selecting a single new cluster leader from one of said majority and minority groups of nodes; and

validating approval of node leadership election within said cluster of nodes to function as said new cluster leader, including determining said selected cluster leader has connectivity with a select group of clients in communication with said cluster following selection of said new cluster leader.

23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the step of pruning cluster leader candidates includes one of the nodes with a higher identifier node value refraining from requesting a position of new cluster leader candidate.

24. (New) The method of claim 22, further comprising said first pass of said two pass protocol determining if said selected cluster leader candidate is from said majority grouping of said nodes within said cluster of nodes.

25. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the step of pruning cluster leader candidates includes mitigating time to convergence of election of said new cluster leader.

26. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the step of validating approval of node leadership election within said cluster of nodes to function as a new cluster leader includes biasing cluster reformation selected from the group consisting of: a majority grouping of nodes within said cluster of nodes, and connectivity with a select group of clients in communication with said cluster, and combinations thereof.

27. (New) The method of claim 26, further comprising requiring additional time for the election of said node leader candidate from a minority grouping of nodes within said cluster of nodes.

28. (New) The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of electing said new cluster leader candidate from a minority grouping of nodes within said cluster of nodes upon failure of a cluster leader candidate from a majority grouping of nodes, wherein said failure is selected from a group consisting of: lock of a quorum disk, and said cluster leader candidate, and combinations thereof.

29. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the step of selecting a single new cluster leader including employing a quorum disk lock with a protocol to provide arbitration of ownership of a quorum resource for an evenly split cluster.

30. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising election of one of the nodes within a grouping of connected nodes to function as a new leader candidate, wherein said node is selected from a group consisting of: a majority grouping of connected nodes and a minority grouping of connected nodes.